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Brief and dispassionate View

OF THE

D I F F I C U L T I E S

ATTENDING THE

Trinitarian, Arian, and Socinian Systems;

OCCASIONED BY THE

Fierce Controversies now on Foot in divers Parts of the
Kingdom respecting those Subjects;

AND, DESIGNED TO ASSIST

CANDID, HUMBLE, and MODEST INQUIRERS in their
SEARCHES after GOSPEL TRUTHS.

BY JOSIAH TUCKER, D.D.
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G L O C E S T E R :
P R I N T E D B Y R. R A I K E S .
M.DCC.LXXIV.
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Brief and Dispassionate View, &c.

HE Proofs from various Passages of Scripture, in Favour of a Trinity of Persons, in the undivided Essence of the Godhead, are so many and various, so copious and express, that it is hardly possible to conceive, there would have been any Doubt about their Meaning, had the Doctrine which they declare been as easy to be understood, as they are explicit in declaring it to be the Matter of Fact. [See Archbishop *Wake's* Catechism, Sections IX and XV. printed at the End of this Pamphlet.]

BUT after we have gathered from various Passages, and by comparing Scriptures with Scriptures, that in fact there is a Trinity of *co-equal* Persons in one undivided Essence;---

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we cannot proceed a Step farther without embarking in endless Difficulties and Perplexities. We cannot, for instance, conceive, much less define, what is the Cause of *personal Identity*,---or what is *Essence*: And therefore we cannot, by any Powers of Reason hitherto discovered, pretend to say, whether such a Trinity of *co-equal* Personalities, or personal Identities, can *co-exist* in one undivided Essence, or not. [Indeed Mr. *Lock* once attempted to assign the Cause or Substratum of personal Identity; but failed most egregiously, by mistaking the Effect for the Cause. See Bishop *Butler's* Dissertation on Personal Identity, at the End of his Analogy. Self-Consciousness, the Cause assigned by Mr. *Lock*, may be allowed to be a good *Proof* of Personal Identity; but it cannot possibly be the Cause of it; inasmuch as it is itself only the Effect, or Operation of some other Cause, hitherto undiscovered. In short, I must exist, before I can be conscious of my Existence. And therefore Self-Consciousness can be nothing more than the Effect of some hidden Cause. As to the giving any Definition of *Essence*, Mr. *Lock* would not attempt it; but declared himself unequal to such a Task.] Moreover, if these co-equal Persons in the Trinity should be characterised (as they actually are) under the Denomination of a Father,---of a Son,---and of a Spiritual Agent distinct from both;

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both ; these Characteristics encrease our Difficulties, instead of removing them. For when we come to reason analogically on each of these Heads ; that is, when we come to descant on the Relations and Properties of a Father,---and of a * Son,---and of a third Person distinct from both ;---we find, either that our usual Rules of reasoning are all inadequate to this Purpose, and cannot assist us ;---or else, that there cannot be that Co-equality and Co-eternity of Persons in the undivided Essence of the Godhead, which the above mentioned Texts of Scripture naturally, and at first Sight, lead us to believe.

The Trinitarian System.

A Believer in the Trinity will chuse to adopt the former of these Alternatives, viz. *That our usual Rules of reasoning in other Cases, are inadequate in this,---not only as the most pious and humble, but as the most rational and defensible Opinion.* Nay, he will affirm further, that this is no more than what ought to be ex-

* The Incarnation of the eternal Son of God, adds to the Number of these Difficulties : But there is no need of considering this single Difficulty in any separate View, or independently of the others.

pected in the Course of Things ; because our Rules of Reasoning, drawn from the Natures, Properties, and Distinctions of *finite* Creatures, must fail, and become unserviceable, *to a great Degree*, when we come to apply them towards explaining the Existence, Powers, and Distinctions inherent in, or belonging to, the infinite and incomprehensible Source of all Things ; and to confirm this Observation by undeniable Facts, he will naturally observe, that though we have as clear Proofs, both from Reason and Scripture, as we can have of any Thing, that the Deity is an independent and self-existent Being, that he is also eternal, omniscient, and omnipresent,---yet when we come to make use of any human Helps towards explaining the *exact* Meaning, or ascertaining the *precise Ideas* of these Things,---we encounter with Difficulties almost innumerable ; and are so far from making any real Progress in Knowledge, that 'tis well if we escape from falling into gross Absurdities. Therefore, seeing that all the primary Attributes of God are absolutely above the Reach of our mental Powers, and in their own Nature incomprehensible ; and seeing also, that the Doctrine of the Trinity is evidently, and according to the very State of the Case, one of this incomprehensible Sort,---the Trinitarian judges it to be the wiser and more prudent, as well as the more modest Part, to accept the
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Doctrine in *the gross*, without entering into any curious Disquisitions about it, or pretending to fathom such bottomless Depths by the short Line of his scanty, imperfect Reason.

AND having advanced thus far, perhaps he may add *ex abundanti*, That every plain, *unlettered* Man, of sound Judgement and natural Modesty, feels himself obliged to make the very same Kind of Distinction relative to the Doctrine of *Antipodes*, which he, the Trinitarian, thinks necessary to be made respecting the Trinity. For such a Man must necessarily reason after the following Manner: "Either what
 " all the great Scholars so confidently declare,
 " That a Ship may sail *topsy-turvy*, with its
 " Keel directly opposite to my Feet, IS IMPOSSIBLE TO BE TRUE,---or else all my former
 " Experiences and Rules of judging are of no
 " Service to me in this Affair; and I must have
 " Recourse to other Methods of Reasoning,
 " hitherto unknown."

Now this other Method, as soon as ever it is discovered, unravels the whole Mystery at once; and then the honest Man not only comprehends, but sees no Manner of Difficulty in that very Doctrine which so lately appeared to him to be almost, if not altogether, impossible. The Application is obvious: For what we know to be

be a Fact in one Case, ought not to be pronounced to be impossible in another; especially if this latter Case should be, in its own Nature, still farther removed from all our known Powers of apprehending, and usual Rules of judging. In one Word, from the Instance of Antipodes here brought, it may at least be deemed *possible*, That the Doctrine of a Trinity of co-equal Persons in one undivided Essence may become, in some future Period of our Existence, as intelligible to us all, as that of the Antipodes is at present to Men of Letters.

The Arian System.

AN *Arian*, observing, that the Characteristics of Father,---Son,---and Holy Spirit, will necessarily lead us, if we reason according to the common Course of *other* Things,---to conclude, that there cannot be *that* Co-equality, and Co-eternity of Persons in the Trinity, for which the Trinitarian Believer so earnestly and zealously contends,---therefore resolves to examine all those Texts over again, which are usually brought in Support of the Trinitarian Doctrine.

HAVING this Bias on his Mind, he prepares to search the Holy Scriptures; and then by the Help

Help of subtle Criticisms, strained, and far-fetched Comments and Glosses, he at last discovers, or fancies that he discovers, that these Texts may be so understood as to imply a Supremacy of the first Person over the second, and the third,---not only in Point of *Order and Oeconomy*, but also of ~~Self~~ *Self*-Existence,---*Omni-*presence,---*Omni*science,---*Eternity*, and the like. *nece*

BUT having proceeded thus far, his Labours are so far from being at an End,---that here they properly begin. For every Step he advances, presents him with fresh Difficulties, and new Embarrassments: Therefore, in order to render his Scheme uniform and consistent with itself, and to answer the Trinitarian Objections, he must in his Turn act on the *defensive Side*: That is, he must maintain the following Paradoxes, viz. That tho' the second Person in the Trinity ought to be acknowledged to be the Creator of all Things both in Heaven and Earth;---yet he himself owes his very Existence to the sovereign Pleasure and good Will of his Heavenly Father, and consequently is but a *mere Creature*:---That tho' he is over all, God blessed for ever;---yet he is but an inferior, a dependent, and a subaltern God;---tho' Prayers, Praises, and Adorations are to be offered up to him,---yet they are not to be directed

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rected *ultimately* to him: [N. B. This is exactly the same Apology, which the *Roman Catholics* use for worshipping Saints and Angels]---Tho' the only begotten Son of God existed from all Eternity,---yet he was not co-eval or co-eternal with his Father :---Tho' he is omniscient,—yet his Knowledge is borrowed and circumscribed :—And tho' he is omnipresent,—yet his Omnipresence is merely systematic, relative, and local.

THESE are some out of many Perplexities, which the Arian System unavoidably labours under. But this Specimen is enough to convince any indifferent Person, that the Arian, in getting rid of the Trinitarian Difficulties, doth not at all mend the Matter. For he not only strains the Scripture-Expressions to Senses, which they do not naturally convey; but also involves himself in such Intricacies (to speak in the softest Manner) as even on the Footing of Human Reason, would render his Scheme not a Jot more eligible than the other. Add to all this, that by representing our Lord in so inferior a Character, as that of a *Deputy-Divinity*, he evidently saps the Foundation of the whole Doctrine of Redemption, Satisfaction, and Attonement.

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The Socinian System.

THE Socinian, as far as the present Controversy is concerned, seems to be a disinterested Spectator on both Sides. He feels the Weight of the Objections both against the Trinitarian, and the Arian Systems; and therefore weakly, perhaps *arrogantly* imagines, that he can devise a third, which is encumbered with no Difficulties at all. Filled with this Persuasion, he boldly pronounces the Holy Spirit to be *no distinct Person*, but only a mere Quality, Emanation, or Attribute of the Deity. [Strange, that we should have been commanded to be baptized in the Name of a Quality, Attribute, or Emanation!] And as to our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, he was a mere Man, like other Men; being no otherwise the Son of God, than as *Adam* and all Mankind may be stiled the Sons, or Offspring of one common Parent.

THIS, it must be owned, is very short and concise: It cuts the Knot of Controversy asunder, and solves all the former Difficulties at once. But after this is done, what is to become of the Holy Scriptures? And how is their Authority to be supported, as the infallible Oracles of the Living God? For, granting, if you please, that an Arian, by the Help of subtile Distinctions

Distinctions and learned Criticisms, might make some Passages of Holy Writ to *bend* so as to favour his Hypothesis, this is no Advantage to a Socinian: For he can never make them *bend*; they must *break*, under the Torture of his Operation. Nay more, if his System be really true, the Scriptures of Course must be false; and Christ and his Apostles be ranked among the greatest Hypocrites and Impostors that ever appeared on Earth. For either our Lord was more than a mere Man,---or even than a mere Angel;--nay, either he is that great I AM, which had an Existence, not only before *Abraham*, but before the Worlds began, and upholds all Things by the Word of his Power; or else he must have been one of the falsest and vilest of the human Race, for making such groundless Pretensions.

THE Conclusion of the whole is this:---The Trinitarian System hath confessedly great Difficulties, which human Reason cannot pretend to master. The Arian hath full as great; besides the Injuries occasioned by distorting several very plain Passages of Scripture from their natural and genuine Signification; also of putting the Merits of Christ's Sufferings into a very disadvantageous Point of View. As to the Socinian, it not only strips the Christian Believer of all Hopes and Comforts in a Covenant of Grace founded

founded in Christ's *proper* Atonement, but also sinks the Gospel into a System of mere Morality. Nay, what is still worse, and indeed is the most shocking Part of all, it represents the Author, and the first Publishers of this moral System, to be such very bad Men, as not to be worthy of any Credit or Esteem, on account of their manifold and bare-faced Falshoods.

WHAT then is a rational, a modest, and a pious Man to do in such Cases as these, where Dangers and Difficulties surround him on every Side? Undoubtedly he will reject the Socinian System, if he chuses to retain the Essentials of the Christian Covenant, and to avoid representing the Author of it, as no better than an infamous Impostor. Moreover with Respect to the Arian, he will weigh deliberately, and consider well, Whether this System, with all its Boastings, has any real and solid Advantages over the Trinitarian;---nay, he will particularly examine, whether, on the whole, it be not more liable to Objections, and less eligible on Gospel Principles. Therefore, if this should prove to be the Case, after a serious and solemn Examination,---surely he is justifiable before God and Man in rejecting this likewise, as well as the Socinian:---He is justifiable, I say, in adhering to his former Persuasion or Belief of a Trinity in Unity; notwithstanding all the Cavils which
have

have been or may be raised against it. Nay, in Respect to those very Mysteries, about which such loud Clamours have been excited, he will coolly reflect, that, as he must admit great and inexplicable Mysteries to take Place both in the natural and the moral World,---it would be difficult for him to shew a just Reason, why he should reject the like Mysteries, when coming from Revelation. In one Word, as he is sensible that his Abilities are limited, he will not attempt to push his Enquiries, either in this, or any other Respect, farther than such confined Abilities can safely carry him.

BEHOLD therefore, God is great, and we know him not :--- We know indeed that he exists ; but we know not the Manner of his Existence in any Respect whatever. Consequently, when we believe, that he verily is, *according to what he has revealed himself to be in the Gospel*, and also that he is a Rewarder of those who diligently seek him,---we believe all that is required of us,---we believe enough for our present State and Condition,---because this alone is able to make us wise unto Salvation.

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FROM

Archbishop Wake's Catechism.

SECT. IX.

Q. DO you look upon Christ to have been made by God *Partaker* of the *Divine Nature*; and so, to have been from all *Eternity*, God, together with him?

A. If I believe the Scriptures to give a true Account of the Nature of Christ, so I must believe: For I find the same Evidences in them of the *Godhead* of Christ, that I do of that of the *Father*.

Q. What be those Evidences?

A. First, they give the *Name* of God to him; and that in such a Manner as plainly shews it is to be understood, in its most proper Import and Signification. *Jo. i. 1. xx. 28. Rom. ix. 5. 1 Tim. iii. 16. Phil. ii. 6. 1 Jo. v. 20.*

Secondly, they ascribe the most proper, and incommunicable *Attributes* of God to him. Such

as Omnipotence, *Jo.* v. 17, 18. *Rev.* i. 8. xi. 17. ---Omniscience, *Jo.* xvi. 30. xxi. 17. *Luk.* vi. 8. comp. *Jo.* ii. 24, 25. *Rev.* ii. 23. ---Immensify, *Mat.* xviii. 20. xxviii. 20. *Jo.* iii. 13. ---Immutability, *Heb.* i. 11, 12. xiii. 8. ---and even Eternity itself, *Rev.* i. 8, 17. xxii. 13. *Prov.* viii. 22. *Mich.* v. 2. *Isa.* ix. 6, 7.

To him, thirdly, they ascribe such *Works*, as can belong to none that is not *God*. The *Creation* of the *World*, *Jo.* i. 3, 10. *Col.* i. 16. *Heb.* i. 2, 10. ---The *Preservation* of it, *Heb.* i. 3. ---*Miracles*, *Jo.* v. 21, 36. vi. 40. ---The *Mission* of the *Holy Ghost*, *Jo.* xv. 26. xvi. 7, 14. ---And, in short, all the *Works* of *Grace* and *Regeneration*, *Jo.* v. 21 x. 16. xiii. 18. *Acts* xvii. 31. xx. 28. *Eph.* v. 1, 6, &c.

Add to this, fourthly, that he is there shewn to be *Honoured* as *God*, *Jo.* v. 23. *Heb.* i. 6. ---*Prayer* is made to him, *Acts* vii. 59. *1 Cor.* i. 2. ---*Faith* and *Hope* are directed to be put in him, *Jo.* xiv. 1. *Psal.* ii. 12. ---*Praises* and *Thanksgivings* are given to him, *Glory* and *Honour* are rendered to him, *Rev.* v. 13. compare iv. 11.

And no wonder; since, lastly, the *Nature* of *God* is therein also expressly ascribed to him, *Heb.* i. 3. *Phil.* ii. 6. *Col.* ii. 9. comp. *Col.* i. 15, 19.

Q. But if *Christ*, therefore, be *God*, as well as the *Father*, how can he be called the *Son* of *God*?

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A. Because he received his Divine Nature from the *Father*; who is the Beginning, and Root of the Divinity; and has communicated his own Essence to *Christ*: Who, therefore, though he has the *same Nature*, and so, in that, is equal with the *Father*; yet is he in Order after him; as being *God of God*.

Q. How does it appear that *Christ* received his Divine Nature from the *Father*?

A. It can only be known by that Revelation which God has made of it in the Holy Scriptures: Where he is, for this Reason, said to be the *Brightness of his Glory, and the express Image of his Person*, *Heb. i. 3.*---*The Image of the invisible God*, *Col. i. 15.* *2 Cor. iv. 4.*---*To be from God*, *Jo. vii. 29.*---*To have Life from the Father*, *Jo. v. 26.* and the like. And upon this Account it is, that our Saviour himself says, *that the Father is greater than he*, *Jo. xiv. 28.*---*That he can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do*, *Jo. v. 18, 19.* Or if this be not yet plain enough, they tell us farther, in express Terms, that he is the *Begotten*, and the *only begotten, Son of the Father*, *Jo. i. 14, 18. iii. 16, 18. 1 Jo. iv. 9. v. 1.*

Q. But will not this make the *Holy Ghost*, as much *God's Son*, as *Christ*? And how then is *Christ* his only Son.

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A. In Matters of this Kind, which are so far above our Capacities, and of which we know nothing, but what God has been pleased to reveal to us, we must speak, as God, in his Word, has taught us to speak. Now the Scriptures no where call the *Holy Ghost*, the *Son of God*; nor *God*, the *Father of the Holy Ghost*: And therefore, though we know not what the precise Difference is, yet because the proper Act of a *Father* is to *beget*; we say that *Christ* received his *Divine Nature* from *God* by *Generation*; but of the *Holy Ghost* we say, as the *Scriptures* do, that he *proceedeth from the Father*, *Jo. xv. 26.* and is *the Spirit* not of the *Father* only, but of the *Son also*, *Gal. iv. 6. Rom. viii. 9. Phil. i. 19. 1 Pet. i. 11.*



S E C T. XV.

Q. **W**HAT does the *Third Part* of your Creed contain?

A. It contains all that is needful to be known, and professed by us, with Relation to the *Holy Ghost*.

Q. What do you account needful to be believed concerning him?

A. Not only that there is a *Holy Ghost*; but that he is the *Third Person* in the ever-blessed *Trinity*; and partakes, as such, of the *same Divine Nature*, with the *Father*, and the *Son*.

Q. How does this appear?

A. By the plain Testimony of the *Holy Scriptures*; by which alone we are capable of knowing any Thing in these Matters. Now those Sacred Writings evidently speak of him, not only as a *Person*, but as a *Divine Person*; and that distinct both from the *Father*, and from our *Lord Jesus Christ*.

Q. Wherein do the *Holy Scriptures* speak of this Blessed Spirit, as of a *Person*?

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A. * They give him the proper *Names* of a Person: *God*, *Acts* v. 3, 4.---*Lord*, 2 *Cor.* iii. 87. ---*The Spirit*, 1 *Sam.* xvi. 14. *Jo.* xvi. 13.---*The Comforter*, *Jo.* xiv. 26. xvi. 7, &c. * They ascribe to him the *Properties* of a Person; *Understanding*, 1 *Cor.* ii. 11.---*Will*, 1 *Cor.* xii. * They represent him as doing *Personal Acts*: He is *Sent*, he *Cometh*, *Goeth*, *Heareth*, *Teacheth*, *Jo.* xiv. 26. xv. 26, 27. *Jo.* xvi. 7, 13, &c.---*Is Tempted*, *Resisted*, *Grieved*, *Eph.* iv. 30.---*Speaketh*, *Commandeth*, *Intercedeth*, *Acts* x. 19. xiii. 2. *Rom.* viii. 26. * They join him with those who are confessedly *Persons*, viz. *God the Father*, and our *Lord Jesus Christ*. In the *Form of Baptism*, *Mat.* xxviii. 19. In *St. Paul's Wish* for the *Corinthians*, 2 *Cor.* xiii. 14. In *St. John's Catalogue of Witnesses*, 1 *Jo.* v. 7. They oppose him to such *Spirits*, as we all allow to be *Persons*, 1 *Sam.* xvi. 14. * They represent him under *Personal Apparitions*, *Mat.* iii. 16. *Acts* ii. 3. and by all this undoubtedly assure us, that he is a *Person*.

Q. By what Arguments from the Holy Scriptures do you prove, that he is a *Divine Person*?

A. By the same by which I before shewed the *Son* so to be. They ascribe to him the *Names of God*, *Acts* v. 3, 4. 2 *Cor.* iii. 17.---*The Attributes of God*, *Heb.* ix. 14. *Psal.*

cxix. 7. *Job* xxvi. 13.---The *Honour of God*, They tell us, that he is the *Spirit of God*, *1 Cor.* ii. 11, 12.---That a *Sin* may be immediately committed against him, *Mat.* xii. 31.---That his Dwelling in us, makes our *Bodies* the *Temples of God*, *1 Cor.* iii. 16.---That Christ, by being conceived by him, became the *Son of God*, *Luke* i. 35.---They teach us to baptize in his *Name*, together with those of the *Father*, and *Son*, *Mat.* xxviii. 19.---And shew us even *St. Paul* himself paying a *Religious Invocation* to him, *1 Thes.* iii. 12, 13. *2 Thes.* iii. 3, &c.

Q. How do you prove him not only to be a *Divine Person*, but a *Person distinct* both from the *Father* and the *Son*?

A. He proceedeth from the *Father*, and therefore is not the *Father*, *Jo.* xv. 26.---He is sent by the *Son*; and therefore is not the *Son*, *Jo.* xvi. 7.---He is sent, sometimes by the *Father*, in the *Name of the Son*; and sometimes by the *Son*, from the *Father*; and therefore is neither the *Father*, nor the *Son*, *Jo.* xiv. 26. xv. 26.

Q. But did not you before say, that there is but *one God*? And how now do you say, that the *Father is God*, the *Son is God*, and the *Holy Ghost is God*?

A. That there is but *one God*, the *Holy Scriptures* plainly declare; and even *Reason* itself confirms it to us. And yet the same *Scriptures*

tures as plainly declare, every one of these three to be *God*. And the only Way we know of reconciling these two, seemingly contrary Assertions, is to say, that these three partake of *one*, and the *same Divine Nature*, communicated from the *Father* to the *Son*; and from *both* to the *Holy Ghost*; and that therefore they together make but *one God*.

Q. How can it be possible that three distinct *Persons* should so partake of the *One Divine Nature*, or *Essence*, as All together to make but *One God*?

A. That is not my Concern to determine: This I am sure, that if the *Scriptures* be (as we all allow that they are) the *Word of God*, what they plainly deliver must be true, because it is, in effect, delivered by God himself; who can neither be himself deceived, nor will deceive me. Now that they deliver both these Propositions to me; that *the Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Ghost is God*; and yet, *that there are not Three Gods, but One God*: I am as sure, as I can be of any Thing that is spoken or written, for my Understanding. That therefore these Assertions are true, and credible, I am sure. But how, or after what Manner, I am to understand them, so as to remove all Shew of Contradiction in them, this the Holy Scriptures have not revealed; nor do

I therefore presume to pronounce any Thing, more particularly concerning it.

Q. Why then do you say that they are *Three Persons*, and but *One God*, in the *Divine Essence*?

A. Because I know not how better to express the *Unity*, and *Distinction* of them; and they are *Terms* which the *Church* has long received; and I see no Reason to depart from them, unless I knew of some better and more apt Expressions to use in their Stead.

F I N I S.



Lately published by the same AUTHOR.

1. **A**N APOLOGY for the present CHURCH of ENGLAND, as by Law established, occasioned by a Petition laid before Parliament, for abolishing Subscriptions. — The 2d Edition.

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SERMON 4. Different Methods of Conversion recorded in Scripture. —
SERMON 5. The Penitent Thief on the Cross, the only Jew of his Time who recognized the true Character of the Messiah in the Person of our Lord. —
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